



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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WHOOPING CRANES SIGHTED AT MEDICINE LAKE REFUGE IN MONTANA

Whooping cranes have twice been sighted this month at the Medicine Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Montana, the Department of the Interior announced today.

While this first record of whoopers on this Montana refuge was good news to conservationists, they were more interested in the fact that there were two young birds present. Production of young is watched closely each year for it tells whether or not the fight to save these birds is succeeding. The Canadian Wildlife service already has reported three young birds sighted this year in the far north.

It was also announced by Director Daniel H. Janzen of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, that a pair of whooping cranes had arrived October 19 at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge on the coast of Texas, where most of the surviving whoopers winter. Director Janzen said that he had been notified that Refuge Manager Almo G. Adams had sighted one whooping crane on the Montana Refuge on the afternoon of October 4 and that on the morning of October 13 he sighted four of the nearly extinct species.

Adams said he believed the whoopers had arrived on the refuge with a flight of sandhill cranes on October 3.

The group sighted on October 13 consisted of two adults and two juveniles.

"The younger and smaller birds were quite rusty in appearance and the feathers of one of the adults were also somewhat stained", Adams said.

It is believed the four whoopers sighted at Medicine Lake are part of the southward migration which normally takes place at this season of the year. Last January the Fish and Wildlife Service counted only 32 of the big birds still remaining in the world. Of these, six were in captivity—five in New Orleans and one in San Antonio, and 26 were free—24 on the Aransas Refuge and two on Matagorda Island near the refuge.

The birds nest in the summertime near Great Slave Lake in Canada.

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